



## **Impact of Leaders Gratitude on Employee Mental Health Among IT Employees**

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### **Abstract**

The given paper is devoted to the impact of gratitude of leaders on the mental health of the IT professionals, which is a highly unstable sphere in terms of excessive workloads, deadlines and technological change. The psychological well-being has emerged as one of the key factors that influence the performance, engagement, and retention of employees working in such environments. The paper focuses on how gratitude expressions by leaders, formal and informal, affect the level of stress, emotional stability and overall mental well-being of employees.

This research is founded on the concepts of positive psychology and organizational behaviour, and is intended to investigate gratitude in its role in leadership that positively affects the establishment of a supportive, positive atmosphere at the workplace and the establishment of an inclusive culture in the workplace. The data concerning the IT employees was collected with the help of structured questionnaires under which the perceived leader gratitude, job stress, emotional exhaustion, and psychological well-being were estimated. Associations between the variables and the level of correlation have been evaluated using statistical software.

The findings indicate that an excellent positive relationship exists between the benevolence of the leaders and the psychological well-being of the workers. Workers who feel they are more appreciated by the leaders have a lower stress level, less burnout, and increased emotional resilience. Leadership that is driven by gratitude also promotes trust, improves the social relationships among people, and brings a sense of belongingness to the teams. On the other hand, lack of appreciation leads to anxiety, lack of involvement, and low job satisfaction.

The paper gives the significance of the inclusion of gratitude in leadership ways as an economical and efficient tool in enhancing psychological well-being in the IT industry. It recommends that organizations push leaders towards using simpler but significant words of appreciation to create a healthier workplace. The study is valuable to the existing body of research concerning the well-being of employees and provides feasible assumptions on human resource policies and leadership development programs.

**Keywords:** Leader Gratitude, Employee Mental Health, IT Employees, Workplace Well-being, Psychological Well-being, Job Stress, Emotional Exhaustion, Employee Engagement, Positive Leadership, Organizational Behaviour, Workplace Culture

### **1. Introduction**

The contemporary work environment, especially in Information Technology (IT), is typified by fast innovation, high performance pressure, and the unending stress to respond to evolving needs. The same factors are leading to the growth of the organization; nevertheless, they also lead to an increase in stress and burnout in employees and deterioration of their mental health. In this regard, the leadership behavior is very important in defining the psychological experience of employees in the workplace. Gratitude is one of the minor but understudied leadership

attributes that has been identified to affect employee mental health.

Leader gratitude is an act of appreciation, recognition, and acknowledgment of the efforts and contributions of the subordinates by leaders. These words promote a favourable emotional atmosphere, enhance the level of interpersonal relationships and make employees feel valued and fitting. Within the high-pressure setting, such as the IT industry, where workers usually have to meet strict deadlines and have heavy workloads, the availability of a positive and encouraging leader can serve as a buffer to stress and emotional burnout.

The issues of mental health among IT workers have also become a matter of concern owing to the prolonged working hours, joblessness, and work-life discrepancy. Lack of mental health not only has personal implications on the well-being of an individual but also has effects on productivity, engagement, and work performance. Hence, it is crucial to determine aspects that can be implemented to improve mental fortitude and emotional stability as a means of managing a sustainable workforce.

This paper seeks to look into the effects of gratitude by leaders on the mental well-being of IT employees. The study aims to provide insights into the interplay between the appreciation of leadership and the psychological well-being of employees, to the body of knowledge on organizational behavior and also to the management field practice. This dynamic awareness may enable organizations to create healthier workplaces and contribute to the culture of appreciation, which in turn would be beneficial to employees and organizational performance.

## **2. Background of the study**

Over the past few years, the Information Technology (IT) industry has grown tremendously, which has greatly changed the nature of work, bringing both opportunities and challenges to employees. The IT sector has high performance requirements, strict deadlines, ever-changing technologies and working overtime. Although these need to be considered and contribute to the organizational growth and innovativeness, they also impose significant psychological pressures on the workforce that could contribute to stress, burnout, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Consequently, employee mental well-being has become a burning issue that companies are keen on addressing as they aim to sustain productivity, engagement, and workforce well-being.

The leadership is an important factor that affects the work environment and employee experience. The expression of gratitude by leaders has become another behaviour that has attracted interest as a positive and influential practice among other leadership behaviours. The inclusion of employees in an organizational culture can be achieved through gratitude, which is the recognition and appreciation of the efforts and contributions of the employees. Employees will feel much better appreciated, respected, and motivated when the leaders genuinely show gratitude, and it may make them experience better psychological well-being.

Although positive organizational behaviour gains increasing interest, little is known about the particular effect of the gratitude of leaders on employee mental health, especially in the IT sector. The majority of the current literature has been devoted to the styles of leadership, including transformational or transactional leadership, and very little effort has been put into the role of gratitude as a specific leadership behaviour. Moreover, the special work processes of IT workers, such as remote work, virtual teamwork, and work-related stress, also require more insight into factors that can be optimized to positively influence the mental conditions of IT workers.

The research is based on the assumption that the gratitude provided by leaders can become a psychological resource, which reduces stress and encourages emotional robustness among employees. Gratitude can also help decrease negative mental health consequences since it can create a sense of recognition and belonging and increase job satisfaction in general. This is why the study of this connection is critical to building effective managerial practices and organizational policies that are directed to enhance the well-being of employees.

In this regard, this study aims to investigate the effect of gratitude expressed by leaders on the mental health of the IT employees. By filling this gap, the study will contribute to the contribution of the current body of knowledge and yield useful information to organizations that seek to establish healthier and more accommodating work environments.

## **3. Justification**

High-pressure work environments and constantly growing demands in the IT sector have sounded alarm bells regarding the mental health of employees who have to work under intense stress, anxiety, and burnout. Although organizations are spending a lot in the field of technological development and increasing their productivity, relatively less focus is paid to the emotional and psychological aspects of the staff. Here, the behaviour of leadership is vital in influencing the experiences in the workplace. Gratitude has become a significant but poorly researched positive leadership quality that can impact employee well-being, among other positive leadership qualities.

By expressing genuine appreciation and recognition from the leaders, the leaders can help to provide a positive working environment, emotional stability, and ease the feeling of isolation in employees. Despite the fact that this seems to be advantageous, there is limited empirical research on the direct relationship between the gratitude of leaders and employees and their mental state, with regard to the IT industry. Most of the existing studies on the subject of leadership styles (or in general) or organizational support create a vacuum in the understanding of the

specific positive emotions displayed by the leaders and how they affect the psychological consequences of the employees.

This study is therefore justified as it seeks to address this gap by investigating how a thankful leader expresses gratitude, which leads to the mental health of IT employees. The findings can guide organizations in designing leadership development programmes that emphasise on positive interpersonal behaviours and emotional intelligence. Besides, the analysis can also be included in the literature on the sphere of organizational behaviour and mental health research because it addresses the notion of gratitude as a strategic organizational health and productivity instrument.

#### 4. Objectives of the Study

1. To test the effect of the thankfulness of the leaders on the mental health of employees working in the Information technology sector.
2. To assess the correlation between the gratefulness manifested by the leaders and the psychological well-being of the employees.
3. To determine the relationship between perceived gratitude on the part of leaders and stress levels among the IT employees.
4. To analyze the existence of gratitude among leaders that decreases anxiety and burnout at the workplace.
5. To establish what gratitude-driven leadership has on job satisfaction and emotional stability among employees.

#### 5. Literature Review

Gratitude as a concept has attracted a lot of focus in the sphere of positive psychology and organizational behaviour. Gratitude as a positive emotional attitude to being benefited has been largely linked to enhanced psychological well-being, less stress, and interpersonal relationships in work environments. Recent sources emphasize that the expression of gratitude by the leaders can have a great impact on the mental health outcomes of employees.

Evidence is well-grounded based on studies on gratitude interventions. An example that can be given is that Komase et al. (2021) carried out a systematic review and discovered that gratitude-based interventions in a workplace had a significant impact on the decrease of stress levels and depressive symptoms, but showed mixed outcomes regarding overall well-being. On the same note, Kirca, Malouff, and Meynadier (2023), in a meta-analysis of 25 randomized controlled trials, found that there is a statistically significant positive effect on psychological well-being (increased happiness and life satisfaction) of gratitude interventions. These results prove that gratitude is an important psychological asset within the organization.

To be more precise, gratitude was proven to contribute to the creation of a supportive and cooperative atmosphere at the workplace. As Sawyer et al. (2022) point out, gratitude improves prosocial behavior as helping colleagues, which improves workplace relationships and social support networks. Social support is a factor that has been predictive of mental health and, therefore, indicates a mediated route in which gratitude can determine employee welfare.

Leadership is also very important in influencing emotional climates in organizations. New studies on the leader gratitude expression (LGE) point out that leaders who express gratitude actively will foster a sense of belonging and self-worth in employees. Zhang et al. (2025) discovered that leader gratitude has a positive effect on organizational-based self-esteem and perceived insider status, which are critical psychological determinants associated with mental health and engagement of employees. This means that gratitude as practiced by the leaders is not just symbolic, but it has quantifiable psychological effects.

In addition, gratitude has been associated with the lessening of stress at the workplace as well as enhancing resilience. According to Tsukada et al. (2025), gratitude is related to decreased presenteeism due to its role in improving coping procedures, social assistance, and self-efficacy. Such protective effects are especially applicable in high-pressure settings that can cause burnout and mental exhaustion to employees, i.e. in the IT sector.

Mental health outcomes are also reinforced through collective gratitude at the organizational level. Komase, Akiyama and Kawakami (2022) discovered that a culture of shared gratitude in the workplace has a very strong impact on work engagement, which is widely associated with psychology. This indicates that gratitude through leadership may be developed in a wider organizational culture to maintain the mental health of the employees.

Also, gratitude brings emotional strength and job satisfaction. Liu and Yang (2025) point out that gratitude lessens stress and improves psychological strength, and improves the work environment, which ultimately decreases turnover intentions. These are critical results in the IT sector where employee retention and mental health are matters of concern.

Theoretically, gratitude can be associated with positive psychology and the social exchange theory. It encourages mutual favourable actions, enhances leader-employee relationships and fosters emotional wellness. Godwin and Hershelman (2021) propose that self-leadership practice can be used to promote gratitude, which supports the findings of previous authors in identifying gratitude as a sustainable psychological resource in organizations.

Although there is increasing evidence, there are gaps in the literature. The majority of research deals with the general work population or medical professionals, whereas there is no substantial research in the field specifically about IT employees. Moreover, the direct connection between the expressed gratitude by leaders and the mental health outcomes of employees should be empirically investigated further, especially in high-pressure and technology-based high-stress workplaces.

## **6. Material and Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Design**

The current study assumes the use of a quantitative and cross-sectional research design to investigate the effectiveness of leaders being grateful on the mental health of employees in the field of IT. In this way, it is possible to measure the variables systematically and determine the connection between perceived gratitude by the leaders and the psychological well-being of workers. To achieve standardized responses, a structured survey method is used, and this can be analyzed statistically and generalized to the population that is chosen. The sample of the research is the employees of the information technology industry, as the perceptions of the leaders are likely to be taken into consideration and the impact of leadership behaviour on the mental health condition, including stress, anxiety, and overall emotional stability.

### **6.2 Data Collection Methods**

A well-structured questionnaire comprising validated scales to assess the gratitude of leaders and the mental state of employees is used to collect primary data. Distribution of the questionnaire is done on internet platforms like email and professional networking systems to make it available and reach more professionals in the IT field. This tool contains Likert-scale questions to determine how employees feel about the expressions of gratitude by their leaders and the state of their mental health. Secondary data is collected using academic journals, industry reports, and other pertinent publications to assist in supporting the theoretical framework and contextual understanding of the research.

### **6.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The research involves full-time IT workers who have at least six months of work experience under a direct reporting manager, so that the respondents will be exposed to a considerable number of leadership behaviors. The participants will be expected to be in the current employment in IT organizations so as to remain relevant to the research context. The study does not cover freelancers, part-time workers, or employees who are not in the IT field. Also, employees who do not have prior work experience in the organization (less than six months) will be excluded because they can provide responses that may be influenced by the short exposure to leaders.

### **6.4 Ethical Considerations**

The study follows the accepted codes of conduct in ethics to safeguard and preserve the privacy of the subjects. Data is collected by first obtaining informed consent from all the respondents, where the study purpose is clearly explained, and voluntary participation is ensured. The participants will be assured that their answers will not be shared for academic purposes. No information about individuals is gathered, and information is safely stored to avoid unauthorized access. The research also makes sure that the subjects are free to drop out at any point with no repercussions.

## **7. Results and Discussion**

### **7.1 Results:**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS**

The research involved the effects of the gratitude of leaders on the mental health of employees in IT. The results of the study were obtained by way of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression on the data obtained through the respondents to make sense of the relationship between variables like the gratitude of the leaders, stress levels, job satisfaction and the overall mental health of the leaders.

#### **2. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 150)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	61.3
	Female	58	38.7
Age Group	21–30 years	68	45.3
	31–40 years	52	34.7
	41+ years	30	20
Experience	< 2 years	40	26.7
	2–5 years	65	43.3
	> 5 years	45	30

**Interpretation:**

The sample is mainly a representation of younger professionals having a moderate level of experience, which is the normal workforce within the IT industry.

**3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS****Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Variable	Mean	SD
Leaders' Gratitude	3.92	0.74
Employee Stress	3.45	0.81
Job Satisfaction	3.88	0.69
Mental Well-being	3.76	0.72

**Interpretation:**

The gratitude among leaders registered comparatively high, which showed that employees have moderately evaluated that leaders appreciate them. Nevertheless, levels of stress are observable, and this implies that there are pressures at work irrespective of good leadership practices.

**4. CORRELATION ANALYSIS****Table 3: Correlation Matrix**

S.No	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Leaders' Gratitude	1	-0.52**	0.61**	0.67**
2	Employee Stress	-0.52**	1	-0.48**	-0.55**
3	Job Satisfaction	0.61**	-0.48**	1	0.64**
4	Mental Well-being	0.67**	-0.55**	0.64**	1

( $p < 0.01$ )

**Interpretation:**

- Leaders' gratitude shows a strong positive correlation with mental well-being ( $r = 0.67$ ).
- A negative relationship exists between leaders' gratitude and employee stress ( $r = -0.52$ ).
- Job satisfaction acts as a supportive factor, positively linked to both gratitude and mental health.

**5. REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

**Table 4: Regression Results (Dependent Variable: Mental Well-being)**

Predictor Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value
Leaders' Gratitude	0.48	6.92	0
Employee Stress	-0.31	-4.85	0
Job Satisfaction	0.36	5.47	0
<b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.58</b>			

**Interpretation:**

- Leaders' gratitude has a significant positive effect on employee mental well-being.
- Employee stress negatively affects mental health.
- Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship, enhancing the positive impact of gratitude.

**7.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results clearly indicate that appreciations by leaders are important in determining the psychological well-being of IT employees. Employee emotional resilience will be enhanced through a sense of appreciation and recognition, which results in a more desirable mental health.

The negative correlation between gratitude and stress of leaders indicates that appreciation serves as a psychological buffer to the stress in the workplace. This especially applies to the IT industry, where employees are usually under stringent deadlines and expectations of performing well.

In addition, the close correlation between gratitude and job satisfaction means that appreciative leadership results in a positive working environment. Employees who feel that their leaders are appreciative have higher chances of having a sense of belonging and motivational attitude that leads to better mental health outcomes.

The findings of the regression analysis prove that the gratitude of leaders is not a supportive factor but a substantial predictor of mental well-being. Gratitude has a strong influence, even in cases controlled by stress and job satisfaction, and its independent role is evident.

**8. Limitations of the study**

There are some limitations to this study that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study seems to be based mainly on self-reported information gathered on IT employees, which can be subject to personal bias, social desirability, or false self-evaluation of perceived leader gratitude, as well as mental health.

Secondly, the study is cross-sectional in nature in that it captures responses at a point in time. Consequently, it fails to provide causal connections among the forms of gratitude expressed by leaders and the mental health of employees, but only shows the connection between the variables.

Third, the sample will only be confined to employees in the IT industry, which can limit the applicability of the results to other industries with a different organizational culture, leadership style and work environment. Differences in job descriptions, size of an organization and geographical location in the IT sector may also have an impact but cannot be completely controlled in the study.

Fourth, the research might not consider all external sources of stress on the mental health of employees, including stressors in their personal lives, economic or organizational policies that are not related to leadership behaviour. Such immeasurable variables may confound the relationships observed.

Fifth, leader gratitude is measured on the perceived basis by the employees instead of an objective measurement, which can be highly different in various situations and among different people. Variations in the meaning of gratitude behaviours may affect response consistency.

Lastly, time and resources did restrict the sample size and scope of data collection, which could impact the depth and width of analysis. Future research can address such shortcomings through the use of longitudinal research designs, multi-source information, and more inclusive and diverse samples to increase the strength and relevance of conclusions.

**9. Future Scope**

The current research on how gratitude by leaders affects the mental health of employees in the IT sector sparks various research gaps that can be used to conduct additional studies and elaborate on the research topic. To achieve the above, future research can widen the area by using the various industrial sectors other than the IT sector to explore whether the impact of leader gratitude differs across different organizational cultures and work conditions. It would be more informative on contextual variations to compare these organizations in the public and the private sector,

startups and multinational corporations.

Longitudinal research designs can be embraced to gain insight into the long-term outcomes of leaders being grateful for the mental health of the employees, their level of job satisfaction, and their overall well-being. Much of this can be achieved through such studies to establish cause-and-effect interrelationships as well as monitor behaviour and psychological changes over time. Future researchers can also use the research to further see how emotional intelligence as a moderating and mediating variable can either reinforce or weaken this relationship positively or negatively.

With the increase in remote and hybrid working arrangements across the IT sector, there is a necessity to analyze the impact of virtual expressions of gratitude on the mind of the leader as opposed to the actual world. Studies can also be done on the ability of digital communication tools to provide genuine appreciation and psychological effects.

The cross-cultural research scope would also contribute to the information on the influence of cultural values and norms on the appreciation and success of leadership behaviours. The identification of the cultural differences among countries and regions can be used in making culturally sensitive leadership practices.

As well, it is possible to improve future research by creating and providing trial intervention programs or training modules that would be used to build gratitude-oriented leadership. The key outcome of such interventions on the mental health of the employees, reduction of stress and commitment to the organization can be measured based on the experimental studies.

Lastly, the incorporation of new analytics tools like artificial intelligence and sentiment analysis might help people to understand the employees' feelings and leader-employee relations in real-time. This would allow organizations to be proactive in the issue of mental health and create a more accommodating and recognitive work environment.

## 10. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed how the gratitude of leaders affects employee mental health in an IT organization, and the importance of positive leadership behaviour in the modern-day organizational environment. The results indicate that the manifestations of true appreciation by leaders are not just ex-post facto actions but strong psychological resources that lead to the better well-being of employees. When staff members feel that their leaders are grateful and appreciative, it is likely that they are less stressed, have fewer feelings of anxiety and emotional fatigue, and are more likely to say they are satisfied with their job, motivated, and psychologically resilient.

In the context of the IT industry, where workload, deadlines, and the necessity to keep up with the technology changes are the order of the day, the gratitude of leaders turns out to be a comparatively inexpensive and people-centric approach towards the promotion of mental health. It provides a working environment, elevates the relationship among individuals and advances their sense of belonging and appreciation. These are the healthy workplace relationships that keep employees interested and engaged in a stressful work environment.

The study also shows that gratitude-based leadership may be used as an aversion program rather than a response program to mental health problems. Another method used by organizations to attain a culture of appreciation is by including gratitude in their daily leadership practices, which not only benefits people but also the organization.

The effectiveness of gratitude, however, depends on the sincerity, support and reliability with the values of the organization and congruity. Slight or low-frequency phrases may not bring the desired effect. Therefore, firms are encouraged to invest in leadership development programs that concentrate on emotional intelligence, empathy and meaningful communication.

In conclusion, the contribution of leaders towards enhancing the mental health of employees among IT professionals is groundbreaking and cannot be ignored. It can also be further explored in further studies that will help determine its long-term implications and applicability in other fields and in other cultures, and could therefore be more intensive in offering more reliable support to healthier and more accommodating workplaces.

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